

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

January 26, 2014

The Honorable Carl Levin
269 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Levin:

Thank you for your recent letter about Iran, as well as for your ongoing leadership on this issue and so many others. I welcome the opportunity to share my views and I have no objection to your sharing them with your colleagues and others. Having served in both the legislative and the executive branches of government, I have a deep respect for the role Congress must play in vital national security matters. In particular, I value the contributions Congress has made in our efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

I come to the current debate as a long-time advocate for crippling sanctions against Iran. In my eight years in the Senate, I supported every Iran sanctions bill that came up for a vote and I spoke out frequently about the need to confront the threat posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions, its support for terrorism, and its hostility toward Israel. As Secretary of State, I spent four years sharpening a choice for Iran's leaders: address the international community's legitimate concerns about their nuclear program or face ever-escalating pressure and isolation. With support from Congress and our allies, our diplomacy yielded the toughest international sanctions ever imposed.

I share the opinion of you and many of your colleagues that these sanctions and the carefully-constructed global consensus behind them are responsible for driving Tehran to the negotiating table. It was because sanctions worked that we are starting implementation of the Joint Plan of Action, an important step – though still only a first step – toward a comprehensive solution.

Now that serious negotiations are finally under way, we should do everything we can to test whether they can advance a permanent solution. As President Obama has said, we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed, while keeping all options on the table. The U.S. intelligence community has assessed that imposing new unilateral sanctions now “would undermine the prospects for a successful comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran.” I share that view. It

could rob us of the diplomatic high ground we worked so hard to reach, break the united international front we constructed, and in the long run, weaken the pressure on Iran by opening the door for other countries to chart a different course.

It was only because the entire world recognized that the United States was willing to engage in good faith negotiations – and that the regime in Tehran was not – that we were able to rally all the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council behind serious sanctions, including Russia and China, and convince major consumers of Iranian oil to seek other supplies. I traveled all over the world making this case to foreign governments and they agreed, often at real cost to their own energy needs, because they saw that Iran was resisting serious negotiations and rejecting basic measures that would prove the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. Threatening new unilateral sanctions at this time risks undermining that progress.

If the world judges—rightly or wrongly—that negotiations have collapsed because of actions in the United States Congress, even some of our closest partners abroad – to say nothing of countries like Russia and China – may well falter in their commitment. And without help from our partners in enforcing them, any new measures we put in place will not achieve maximum impact.

Like President Obama, I have no illusions about the ease or likelihood of turning the Joint Plan of Action into a permanent solution. Nor do I have any illusions that progress toward a nuclear deal will suddenly remove every other concern we have with the Iranian government's behavior, whether in Syria, in the wider region, or toward its own people. So long as Iran remains a sponsor of terrorism and a threat to global security, we will have to remain vigilant in defense of our allies and partners, including Israel. Yet I have no doubt that this is the time to give our diplomacy the space to work. If it does not, there will be time to put in place additional sanctions in the future, with greater international support necessary to ensure enforcement, and to explore every other option on the table.

Congress's leadership has been an essential part of our efforts to prevent an Iranian nuclear capability. As Secretary of State, I appreciated the partnership I had on this issue with you and other leaders on the Hill, even if we sometimes differed on tactics and timing. At the moment it is of particular importance that our government's efforts work in coordination, not at cross-purposes. We should give anyone watching from Tehran no reason to doubt

America's unity and resolve. And should Iran fail to provide adequate assurances to the international community and undertake commitments to ensure it will not and cannot produce a nuclear weapon, then the legislative and executive branches will move with speed and unity, backed by America's allies, to institute even tougher sanctions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hillary Rodham Clinton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hillary" and last name "Clinton" being more prominent than the middle name "Rodham".

Hillary Rodham Clinton